

What is claimed is:

1. An absorbent article having a longitudinal axis and a periphery, the absorbent article comprising,
  - a. a fluid permeable facing layer, at least portions of which are extensible;
  - b. a first absorbent layer joined to the facing layer, the first absorbent layer comprising zones of extensibility, each said zone of extensibility being a region of the first absorbent layer of relatively higher extensibility than regions of the first absorbent layer adjacent to the zone of extensibility;
  - c. a liquid impermeable backsheet joined to the facing layer at the periphery, the liquid impermeable backsheet having a garment facing surface;
  - d. fastening means disposed on at least a portion of the garment facing surface of the liquid impermeable backsheet, the fastening means defining attachment zones; and
  - e. wherein at least a portion of the first absorbent layer is decoupled from the attachment zones of the fluid impermeable backsheet.
2. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the zones of extensibility comprise openings defining slits.
3. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the zones of extensibility comprise incrementally-stretched rib-like elements.
4. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the portion of the first absorbent layer that is decoupled from the attachment zones of fluid impermeable backsheet comprises at least the zones of extensibility.
5. The absorbent article of Claim 1, further comprising a second absorbent layer, the second absorbent layer being joined to the backsheet, and wherein the at least a portion of the first absorbent layer is decoupled from both the second absorbent layer and the attachment zones of the fluid impermeable backsheet.
6. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the first absorbent layer is substantially continuously joined to the facing layer.
7. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the facing layer has zones of enhanced extensibility.

8. The absorbent article of Claim 7, wherein the zones of extensibility of the first absorbent layer are in registry with the zones of enhanced extensibility of the facing layer.
9. The absorbent article of Claim 8, wherein the joining of the facing layer and the first absorbent layer is substantially limited to the portions of the facing layer intermediate the zones of enhanced extensibility.
10. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein each said zone of extensibility defines a generally linear pattern of openings defining slits, the generally linear pattern being oriented obliquely to the longitudinal axis.
11. The absorbent article of Claim 7, wherein each said zone of extensibility defines a V-shaped pattern symmetric about the longitudinal axis.
12. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the facing layer comprises a topsheet and a secondary topsheet.
13. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the facing layer comprises an apertured, formed film.
14. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the facing layer comprises a nonwoven web.
15. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the absorbent article is a catamenial device.
16. An absorbent article having a longitudinal axis and a periphery, the absorbent article comprising,
  - a. an extensible fluid permeable facing layer;
  - b. a first absorbent layer joined to the facing layer, the first absorbent layer comprising zones of relatively low elastic modulus, each said zone of low elastic modulus being a region of first absorbent layer of relatively lower elastic modulus than regions of first absorbent layer adjacent to the zone of low elastic modulus;
  - c. a liquid impermeable backsheet joined to the facing layer at the periphery, the liquid impermeable backsheet having a garment facing surface;

- d. fastening means disposed on at least a portion of the garment facing surface of the liquid impermeable backsheet, the fastening means defining attachment zones; and
  - e. wherein at least a portion of the first absorbent layer is decoupled from the attachment zones of the fluid impermeable backsheet.
17. The absorbent article of Claim 16, wherein the zones of relatively low elastic modulus comprise openings defining slits.
18. The absorbent article of Claim 16, wherein the zones of relatively low elastic modulus comprise incrementally-stretched rib-like elements.
19. The absorbent article of Claim 16, wherein portion of the first absorbent layer that is decoupled from the attachment zones of fluid impermeable backsheet comprises at least the zones of relatively low elastic modulus.